



Category: Outstanding Public Relations Consultancy

Company: Inside Media

Date of incorporation, number of employees - including executive / support staff - and annual fee income:

Established in May 2006. Four Consultants share support services with linked businesses.

Annual fee income of c.£253,000.

Business objectives and analysis of performance against budget over the past three years:

As an experienced team, we are managing strategic change to adjust the mix of work and the industry sectors we are involved in.

We are enjoying success with more Public Affairs work and more social media management. We have extended the work we do in the charity/third sector and are active in increasing our presence in the automotive industry.

Whilst managing this change we have maintained healthy margins to support a generous profit-share scheme; professional and personal development; and pro bono work for causes we support.

In the last three years, gross profit margin has been between 24.4 – 25.5% and net profit (after profit-share distribution) between 8 – 11%.

A brief overview of business / team strategy:

We define success as:

1. Do great work – exceeding expectations against agreed plans
2. Expanding offer – doing more of what we want
3. Developing new industry sectors
4. Improve and reward people – focus on personal development and collectively share success

5. Work pro bono on causes we support and champion volunteering in the creative industries

These drive activity:

Great work:

- All client work is reviewed against agreed metrics – two retained clients lost to other agencies in ten year
- Peer recognition - CIPR PRide and Excellence Awards are our benchmark of quality: Excellence Award Finalist in 2016 and 2017. In last three years, five Gold; three Silver; a total of fifteen Finalist CIPR PRide Awards (since 2010: ten Gold; ten Silver; 37 Finalist)
- First agency to be shortlisted for 'Outstanding Consultancy' and 'Outstanding Small Consultancy' in the same year (2012, 2013, 2016 and 2017)

Expanding offer:

- Having increased Public Affairs work, the sponsorship of one team member to study an MSc. in Strategy, Change, and Leadership at Bristol University extends our capability further
- Increasing the third sector organisations supported
- Increased Social Media Management – c.17% of income

New sectors:

- Built credibility to increase work from automotive sector through success at the leading journalism/PR awards for that industry. We won 'Best Automotive PR Agency' in 2017 and 2018 and the 'Best Campaign' Award in 2017
- Major research project initiated will provide a route into more Corporate Communication work

Improve and reward people:

- Funding and support for part-time MSc. The fees are £6,250 per annum, plus ten study days annually
- Personal objectives are agreed and linked to profit-share scheme
- Investment in personal and professional development includes external courses and 'working hours' time for volunteering
- 30% of net profit divided equally, subject to performance against personal objectives – last three years payments average c.£2,500 each per annum
- Gross Profit averaged 25% and Net Profit averaged 10% in last three year
- CIPR membership is encouraged and fees are paid

Pro bono work:

- Financial success and sustainable approach supports pro bono work for charities
- We discount our rates for a disability sport
- We support the Media Trust in the region – they link third sector organisations with volunteers from the creative industries.

A summary of commitment to CPD and professionalism:

Personal and professional development plans are agreed with everyone and resources invested to allow plans to be realised, including:

- Monthly reviews
- Part-time MSc. Funding
- Time for volunteering
- CIPR membership funded

We produce outstanding work through a genuinely employee-centric approach.

Progress on professional/personal development means qualification for profit-sharing, linking personal action to the success of the business.

Everyone shapes the mix of business we do.

To support collaboration and ensure continuity there is shared responsibility across all accounts.

A summary of recent outstanding achievements, including client list growth / retention:

- Supporting our strategic plan we have changed the mix of business and positioned ourselves to win more third sector and Corporate Communication work
- Three award wins in leading automotive awards will support further new business in that sector
- Increased social media management – now c.17% of income
- Our work with Continental Tyres is regularly recognised and commended by their Global Communication Team. We were asked for guidance on social media content creation and curation and that was shared with all of their international offices
- Other services added include media training; marketing communication; and infographics
- We have extended the commercial value and deepened our relationship with existing clients (incremental work in new areas)
- CIPR Excellence Award Finalist 2016 and 2017 and five Gold; three Silver; fifteen Finalist Awards in total for CIPR PRide Awards, 2015-2017

A summary of a campaign you are particularly proud of, including details of the brief, objectives, strategy, tactics, outputs, outcomes and budget:

Issue and objectives

Aston Manor Cider (AMC) is the UK's largest independent cider maker. We manage all aspects of their communication.

Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) in Scotland put AMC's Frosty Jack's brand at the centre of this issue.

Our focus for AMC was to:

- Ensure AMC was fully represented in the public debate
- Challenge the misinformation from critics
- Support AMC to secure the positive reputation merited

Research, planning, and strategy

- Managed the procurement of independent research
- Provided close scrutiny on academic papers and Government consultations – producing responses and briefing documents
- Monitored issues of interest

AMC invests significantly in independent market research. We had previously surveyed frontline drug and alcohol professionals.

We positioned AMC as an informed and insightful voice.

In parallel, we developed clear themes so that we could create credible opportunities to reflect a merited and positive reputation for AMC and identified instances for independent recognition via awards.

Tactics and implementation

We invested time to understand the composition, scale, and context of the market and formulated their stance on legislative and regulatory issues.

We developed key messages to use proactively and reactively.

We also engaged with the regional media in locations where AMC has a presence.

Another feature of this work was stakeholder engagement.

As well as managing responses to consultations issued by the Government we provided accurate information to MPs and others including academics, trade bodies, and industry commentators.

How negative impacts were avoided, and positives achieved

Our research and insight meant a number of instances where journalists dropped an intended article after we spoke with them.

Investment in original independent research also supported how we countered criticism and negative comment.

Measurement and evaluation

Peer recognition: Gold Award, Reputation Management CIPR PRide Awards for 2017.

For 2017/8 all measures have been exceeded:

- 453 items of coverage, up 99%
- Increased contact with stakeholders
- Increased suite of materials and evidence available to respond to inquiries

Third-party recognition: Supported by us, in 2016/7 AMC won a (then) record 25 Awards. For 2017/8 this increased to 29 Awards – more than any cider producer.

Client satisfaction: Gordon Johncox, Chief Executive of AMC:

“Inside Media has proven to be an invaluable resource and work very closely with us on extremely challenging issues.

“Their approach is very proactive and one of meticulous attention to detail and carefully thought through research and preparation.”

Budget: £54,000. Research costs are paid directly.